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LIVING WITH LINCOLN  
AND OTHER ESSAYS

J. G. RANDALL

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# LIVING WITH LINCOLN AND OTHER ESSAYS

by

J. G. RANDALL

Professor of History  
in the University of Illinois

June, ~~1948~~ 1949

THE  
JOURNAL OF THE  
ROYAL ANTHROPOLOGICAL INSTITUTE

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Dear Professor Randall,

With mingled regret and rejoicing we have learned of your approaching retirement, after many years of teaching at the University of Illinois. Regret there is, not so much for ourselves but for the fresh generations of graduate students at Urbana who will not know the friendly encouragement of your seminars, your thoughtful and provocative guidance in research, the warm inspiration of your personal interest. Great teachers are few, and great men fewer. We are proud and grateful that in you we have known both.

But if your retirement is a lamentable loss to the teaching profession, we believe that ultimately it will prove a great gain to the world of scholarship. Now, freed from the multiple duties of grading papers, preparing lectures, and directing research, you will be able to devote your full energies to the completion of the great historical project on which you are engaged. *Lincoln the President*, that major feat of historical craftsmanship, will all the sooner be completed now.

To signalize our pleasure that a great scholar and a great writer and will now be able to devote his full time to productive research and writing, we the undersigned, formerly graduate students of yours, take much pleasure in presenting in this little booklet four of your hitherto uncollected Lincoln essays.\* These were chosen for republication because to us they seemed to represent the finest qualities of a great teacher—impeccable scholarship, felicity of style, and timeliness of subject. The title of the first essay is truly a characterization of your own career: "Living With Lincoln."

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\* These essays originally appeared in the following publications and are reprinted with the kind permission of the editors: "Living With Lincoln—A New Impression," *The New York Times Magazine*, December 14, 1947; "The Great Dignity of 'the Rail Splitter,'" *The New York Times Magazine*, February 8, 1948; "Lincoln's Great Declarations of Faith," *The New York Times Magazine*, February 6, 1949; "Lincoln and Thanksgiving," *Lincoln Herald*, October, 1947.

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# "LIVING WITH LINCOLN" — A NEW IMPRESSION

*The New York Times Magazine*

December 14, 1947

In the past few weeks students have been at work among the newly opened papers of Abraham Lincoln in the Library of Congress. What they have found is a rich collection, with fresh material that is highly valuable from the historian's point of view. For these voluminous documents throw new light upon Lincoln and his associates and add greater depth to the picture of the man and the problems that beset him. It is apparent that a new phase of Lincoln studies has begun.

Appraisal of the papers, however, has required prolonged examination; meantime certain ready-made questions have tended to create false impressions. For example, one is asked whether there is "anything sensational" in the papers. After three months' complete absorption in them the writer finds the query a bit off key, as if a statesman's record or the elaborate inner history of our nation in an era of supreme crisis could be reduced to a short order of murder for breakfast or scandal for lunch.

Another question has become very familiar: "Do you find anything new in the letters?" The answer to this, contrary to a prevalent misconception, is an emphatic affirmative. What we have in the Lincoln Papers is the essence of historical data. It is source material—the stuff out of which history is built. It is original, not second-hand or retrospective. It knows not of the assassination or what followed. It knows only the living Lincoln.

Before the recent opening the only writers who had access to the collection were Nicolay and Hay, but access is one thing and an adequate use is another. The newness of the collection is unimpaired in that much of it has been passed over. The papers

have informal and warmly human aspects. They are especially valuable for the kind of book, or books, that Nicolay and Hay did not write.

Working with the papers week after week is like going back and living with Abraham Lincoln. Handling the letters and envelopes that he handled, one has the feeling of sitting with the man himself, sharing his irritation at a petulant missive, noting how complaint is patiently borne, hearing now and then a presidential chuckle or hearty laugh, sensing more often the weariness of long-deferred hope, and feeling a welcome uplift, if only for a moment, when the incoming mail is friendly or favorable.

The collection comprises 194 volumes, with 41,751 "mounting numbers," each number representing a sheet of paper, one sheet consisting in many cases of two pages. Though the letters are mostly incoming, Lincoln's own autographs are very numerous—surveys, tables of election figures, tallies of appointments, fragments on various topics, memoranda, many working drafts or copies of outgoing letters, endorsements, and occasionally a copy by the President of what was received by him, as when Reverdy Johnson sent such an illegible letter that the President laboriously wrote it out so far as he could decipher it, leaving blanks for the words he missed.

Some of these writings by Lincoln himself—quite a few, indeed—are new. Nor are these new ones dull. They show the President in significant situations: giving a pardon with a statement of its conditions, declining to sponsor an inventor's interests, sending directions to the Secretary of War, and in one case copying in his own hand what Sherman wrote him from Atlanta concerning the army view that there must be no wavering in the drafting of additional men. In one of the new items the President, when official duty required him to reprimand a captain, turned the reprimand into a handsome uplift for the young man's morale.

At times the President would request John Hay to write saying "The President desires . . ." etc., but such a letter would be signed by Hay. The papers show the falsity of the assertion sometimes made that nearly all the letters signed by Lincoln were composed by Nicolay or Hay. Even when a letter was signed by Hay we cannot always be sure that Hay composed it; there were

at least a few times when Lincoln, in his own hand, drafted a letter for the secretary to "write" and sign.

As for the letters Lincoln signed, they were usually not only handwritten by him but worked up through his own preliminary drafts.

There is, running through the papers, a sense of urgency in the constant pressure of decision. Lincoln had to be both firm and conciliatory, stanch in upholding the Union, but friendly toward well-disposed Southerners. He had to decide what to do with Fremont (not to mention Mrs. Fremont), whether to retaliate when reports came as to the slaughter of colored Union soldiers—after surrender, it was asserted—at Fort Pillow (he did not retaliate); whether Burnside should advance in January, 1863, or Meade in September of that year.

He had to decide whom to appoint, whom to remove, whether and when to make Cabinet changes, how to deal with civil versus military imbroglios such as that between General Butler at Norfolk and Governor Pierpoint, who functioned uncertainly as Union Governor of "restored Virginia." There were many such imbroglios.

To some men power is sweet. To Lincoln it was probably painful. He had the power of life and death as to men under military sentence; in political arrests he had to steer between laxity toward disloyal practices and infringement of civil liberty. To follow Lincoln's daily rounds through his problems is to understand what is meant by the executive function. It is to realize that government is largely a human art.

The collection is a mine or quarry from which, with careful study, many a chapter, book or article could be hewn. Realities of the time were ugly and unromantic. There is enough for a volume on the Missouri muddle alone, with its feuds, civil commotion, guerrilla warfare, and pervasive terrorism. Much the same could be said for Kansas.

What we had in Lincoln's day was not only a war in the regular military sense. The irregular, criminal, chaotic, and violative aspects of the period—which Lincoln sought to cure or check—hardly appear in formal accounts of battles and campaigns. Such disturbances were always aggravated by "politics." Another

book could be written on Union sympathies in the South, of which there is abundant evidence.

Portraits of certain members of the Cabinet acquire new tints and shadings. Cameron's visage improves not at all. Chase's picture takes on unbecoming lines. Stanton's record, already darkened with arbitrariness and arrogance, receives a new tarnish.

In the letters that rolled in while Lincoln was President-elect one is impressed with what might be called the Cameron headache. So strong was the torrent of outraged indignation at the idea of the Pennsylvania politician's appointment that Lincoln, having offered him a Cabinet place, asked him to decline it; but such was Cameron's incredible persistence that Lincoln reluctantly made him Secretary of War, which led to further headaches.

It was an inharmonious Cabinet, Blair and Seward being close to Lincoln in nonvindictive views, while Chase and Stanton, centers of radical pressure, were a continual source of dissension.

As to Chase, it was not merely his impatience at the President that caused the trouble, nor his normal pose of being "pained and surprised" at what the President was doing. The main difficulty arose from the schemes of the Chase political machine. Samuel Galloway (from Columbus, Ohio, February 25, 1864) wrote that officials of the Treasury Department were "using every false and foul effort to suppress the voice . . . of the people."

The previous August the statement had come from Louisiana, where Treasury patronage was heavy, that "every piece of official machinery [was] in motion for one object exclusively, namely the advancement President-wise of Mr. Chase." The Chase boom collapsed by early March, 1864, but at all times a Chase crisis was just around the corner, until finally the President accepted the Secretary's resignation in June, 1864.

The embarrassment of Chase's rivalry, however, was slight when compared to the difficulty of dealing with Stanton, who had a few friends and whose domineering methods were a perennial source of grief. "Stanton is so irritable . . . that . . . a citizen is not safe" is a typical comment. Time and again Lincoln's orders were ignored by his Secretary of War. Thomas H. Hicks, ex-

Governor of Maryland, had a pleasant interview with Lincoln, who was convinced "by examining . . . numerous letters" that a prisoner ought to be released. Lincoln ordered the release and asked Hicks to deliver the order to Secretary Stanton.

"This I did," wrote Hicks, "and received . . . a lecture as uncalled for as it was unpleasant . . . and the rough refusal . . . to execute your order was not the least uncomfortable part of the interview." Stanton refused to examine the papers in the case and accused the ex-Governor of trying "to get Rebels released," a charge that was taken as an insult by a man of Hicks's Union sympathies.

One of the strangest of Civil War episodes was the movement in the summer of 1864 to oust Lincoln—to have another Republican Convention, name another candidate and force Lincoln's withdrawal. (Lincoln had been renominated at Baltimore in early June.) It has been known that this movement existed, but certain angles of it come with new force and astonishment as one examines the papers—for instance, the intrigues associated with Gen. B. F. Butler.

From Freeport, Ill., Thomas J. Turner wrote: "I saw a letter from a prominent member of General Butler's Staff wherein he advised all his friends 'not to commit themselves to Lincoln' . . . that 'Lincoln was hopelessly defeated.'" This writer was convinced that there was a "well-matured plan" to bring out General Butler in Lincoln's place.

The movement seems hard to envisage now, but in July and August of 1864 military failure, financial instability, a sickening sense of war-weariness and vigorous peace agitation combined with radical disapproval of the President to create a wave of defeatism and a feeling among Republicans that Lincoln's reelection was impossible. An attitude of despair seemed to have gripped Republican managers.

It was not until September that the party's prospects were considerably brightened by Sherman's victory at Atlanta. An influence in the same direction was the widespread resentment at the "peace platform" of the Democratic Convention, which was denounced as a "Copperhead" move.

Plans of the anti-Lincoln Republicans were revealed to Lincoln by his friend, J. C. Conkling of Springfield, Ill. Enclosing a copy of a circular issued by John Austin Stevens, president of the Bank of Commerce of New York City, Conkling wrote:

The Circular calls for a Convention to be held at Cincinnati on the 28th inst [September]—I understand the movement is made in favor of Genl. Butler. His Chief of Staff has written in favor of such a Convention.

. . . It is said that a strong pressure is to be made, to induce you to resign . . . as a Candidate in favor of the Cincinnati nominee . . . and that John Wentworth [of Chicago] has said that you had already written out a Letter with reference to resignation.

We know that on August 23, 1864, (when Republican skies were thick with gloom), Lincoln wrote, not a letter with reference to his resignation, but a paper, something like a memorandum to himself, indicating that he considered his defeat "exceedingly probable."

A study of this whole movement shows Lincoln's wisdom in not letting anyone read that document till after the election. If there had been a "leak" as to this memorandum by the President, a great amount of mischief could have been done.

Nowadays a President has a battery of aides, secretaries and assistants, with elaborate agencies to which business may be referred, but Lincoln handled a multitude of vexing and time-consuming matters himself. To enumerate the things brought to the President's attention would be to present a most diverse catalogue, including many items of social history.

A United States marshal asked permission to arrest a Congressman whom he suspected of Confederate sympathies. The distinguished Negro leader, Frederick Douglass, gave advice as to bringing slaves out of the South. When General Rosecrans issued an order at St. Louis forbidding labor associations and strikes, there came a strong protest that the military had no right to intervene "in the social relations of our workingmen and the manufacturers."

Minor pleas ran into the thousands. Of course there were numerous autograph hunters. One young lady asked the President

to autograph a piece of white silk for a wedding quilt. It was put up to him: without the autograph there could be no quilt, and without the quilt no wedding. A wounded soldier asked Lincoln to help collect a long-overdue note from a clerk in Washington; the clerk was getting \$1,800 a year while the soldier was receiving \$13 a month.

There was something coldly disagreeable about the abuse of Lincoln that was committed to writing and sent to him through the mail. It must have been disheartening to hear from his friend, Jesse Dubois in Illinois, that he was ostracized because he favored Lincoln. As a way of consoling the abused President, the Shakespearean actor, James H. Hackett, sent a newspaper clipping showing how Washington had been similarly vilified.

On the other hand a larger amount of the incoming mail which has been preserved was favorable. Through the letters there runs a refrain: The people are with you; the people trust you. In a letter from the Army of the Potomac a Cabinet member was assured that the soldiers loved the President. The reason was given: the keynote to his personality as seen by the soldiers "consists mostly in his honesty, kindness of heart and humanity." After the election of 1864 a soldier sent his re-enlistment stripes to the President who had "re-enlisted." Amos Tuck wrote from New Hampshire: "You have immortalized your name by one of the wisest administrations of power which any man in any country has ever exercised."

Contrary to the general impression, the collection contains a number of Lincoln and Todd family letters. A distressing story unfolds in two letters from Mrs. Lincoln's family. Her brother Levi O. Todd wrote from Lexington, Ky., September 12, 1864, telling how he was working for Lincoln's re-election and asking for a loan of \$150 to \$200 because of ill health and "*actual necessity*."

The sequel is deeply pathetic. Mrs. Lincoln's half-sister, Emily Todd Helm, widow of the Confederate general Ben H. Helm (killed at Chickamauga in September, 1863), wrote to the President on October 30, 1864. She reached Lexington, she said, to find her half-brother Levi dead "from utter want and destitution." Lincoln loved Emily ("little sister") and her letter

with its understandable bitterness must have hurt him deeply. "I would remind you," she wrote, "that your *minnie* [sic] bullets have made us what we are."

There are touching references to Lincoln's stepmother. In a letter of July 27, 1858, A. H. Chapman (who married her granddaughter) told how he read to her newspaper extracts eulogistic of Lincoln. "You can Hardly form an idea how proud it makes her," he wrote. On April 5, 1864, Dennis Hanks, Lincoln's cousin and son-in-law of Lincoln's stepmother, wrote: "Dere Abe I Received your Little Check for 50.00 I shoed it to Mother She cried like a child Abe. . . ."

It is impossible in one article to cover so large and significant a collection. To see how Lincoln met his tasks day after day, and to observe how tremendous those tasks were, is to gain a new appreciation, as well as a fresh portrait, of the man. It is greatly to the credit of the Library of Congress that this unique record has been given an appropriate frame and niche.

Often in perusing these tens of thousands of handwritten pages one marvels how Lincoln lived through it all. As a gentleman from Shelbyville, Tenn., expressed it: ". . . when I think of your Incessant Labours I wonder to myself . . . as you are not Superhuman and cannot any more do without Sleeping Eating and Rest than other men nor cannot extend the day & night Beyond twenty-four hours."

# THE GREAT DIGNITY OF "THE RAIL SPLITTER"

*The New York Times Magazine*

February 8, 1948

Each February brings its celebrations of the Emancipator with their current montage of ideas bearing a more or less genuine Lincoln stamp. We use Lincoln for many purposes, but whatever the use it is well to remember that the best portrait is to be drawn from life. In working toward that portrait this year we have the notable advantage of the newly opened Lincoln Papers in addition to all the other sources. We can come nearer seeing Lincoln close up, and seeing him whole, than in former years. What is the result?

To state that result fully would require many articles, but it may be useful here to emphasize one aspect that is now more clearly revealed than before: Lincoln's craftsmanship in the art of human relations.

It will be well to keep in mind two contrasts: Lincoln's rough-hewn exterior contrasted with a dignity that came from some inner source, and the seemingly casual informality of his demeanor as opposed to his exquisite handling of delicate or difficult situations.

The rail-splitter aspect has been overstressed. Lincoln was no stranger to cultured society. He was not ignorant or naive. There was method in his simplicity, savoir faire in his bland unconventionality. This does not mean that his manner was artful in the sense of being affected or assumed. It means rather that he knew his way about. Seemingly artless, his behavior nevertheless amounted to skilled craftsmanship. Though genuine and self-forgetful, it included what in current vocabulary is called "know-how."

On many a human mind he left the impress of a personality that cannot be adequately appreciated except in terms of the exacting demands that arose daily and hourly in presidential dealing. His "problems" should not be regarded as abstract, or "official" in some detached sense. Usually they involved the personal equation and the human element.

The contrast between Lincoln's rugged and unfashionable appearance and the sometimes unexpected quality of his inner poise and dignity is well indicated in the following description by an English observer:

Fancy a man six foot high, and thin out of proportion; with long bony arms and legs, which somehow seem to be always in the way; with great rugged furrowed hands, which grasp you like a vise; . . . with a long, scraggy neck and a chest too narrow for the arms at its side.

Add . . . a head . . . covered with rough, uncombed and uncombable hair that stands out in every direction; . . . a face furrowed, wrinkled and indented, as though it had been scarred by vitriol; a high, narrow forehead, and, sunk deep beneath bushy eyebrows, two bright, somewhat dreamy eyes, that seem to gaze through you without looking at you; a few irregular blotches of black bristly hair in the place where beard and whiskers ought to grow; a close-set . . . mouth, . . . and a nose and ears which have been taken by mistake from a head of twice the size.

Clothe this figure . . . in a . . . badly fitting suit . . . puckered up at every salient point, . . . put on large, ill-fitting boots, and a puffy hat, . . . and then add to all this an air of strength, physical as well as moral, and a strange look of dignity coupled with all this grotesqueness, and you will have the impression left upon me by Abraham Lincoln.

Starting to tell how Lincoln looked, men would glide into comment on his nature or temperament. Those who met him were aware that the man had more than was revealed at first glance, something of depth and at times of mystery. He was described as a man of "deep prudences," a man of contrasts,

"retired, contemplative," yet highly sociable, often in gay mood, yet given to a sadness that was impenetrable.

The humorist David R. Locke (Petroleum V. Nasby) wrote: "I never saw so sad a face." Perhaps the briefest vignette combining the inner and the outer personality is Donn Piatt's: "This strange, quaint, great man."

People were often distressed at Lincoln's lack of style. He did not look like a President. He slouched in his chair. He hated gloves and wore them awkwardly. Gamaliel Bradford, in his delightful essay on Mrs. Abraham Lincoln wrote: ". . . it must always be remembered that she had that . . . most undomestic and unparlorable figure of Lincoln to carry with her, which would have been a terrible handicap to any woman." To be *unparlorable* in the Victorian age was indeed a handicap, if conventionality were the criterion.

It was a day of fuss and feathers, of zouaves at home and monarchical trappings abroad. Remembering his homely qualities, it gives an amazing sense of contrast to view Lincoln as part of an age that included an oriental tycoon, a Hohenzollern, a militaristic Bismarck, a flamboyant Napoleon III, and a phantom-crowned Maximilian.

What must the homespun leader have felt as Siam offered him a pair of elephants? He could only transmit to Congress the masterpiece of Siamese-English which began: "Somedetch Phra Paramendr Maha Mongkut, by the blessing of the highest super-agency of the whole universe, the King of Siam . . . to his most respected excellent presidency, the President of the United States of America." After contemplating all this magnificence it may have been a relief to Lincoln to read a letter in which a group of French liberals praised him in earnest and scholarly fashion, addressing him simply as "Citizen Abraham Lincoln."

In his role of citizen President Lincoln showed a refinement of courtesy that was the more effective because of its very lack of swank and formality. When the time came for Lieut. Gen. Winfield Scott's retirement nothing could have been more respectful and beautifully thoughtful than Lincoln's behavior toward the old warrior.

As Attorney General Bates records it in his diary, the President sent the distinguished veteran a "delicately and handsomely written" letter. Then Lincoln himself wrote the public announcement in an army order which was "done chastely and in excellent taste." Finally, on the day of retirement (November 1, 1861), the President with the full Cabinet called upon the general, and the President "made a neat and feeling address."

Lincoln would sometimes refuse a general's request in such a fashion as to pay the officer a compliment. When Rosecrans requested that his commission should have a certain date to give him superiority and precedence, Lincoln wrote that he was asking for something that was "the right of other men." The President added: "Truth to speak, I do not appreciate this matter of rank on paper as you officers do. The world will not forget the Battle of Stone River [Murfreesboro], and it will never care a fig whether you rank General Grant on paper or he so ranks you."

Once Gen. Robert C. Schenck called to see the President but departed without doing so. It was a small matter; Lincoln was ill that day; yet the President did not let it pass. He wrote to Schenck in his own hand to show how mortified he was that the general had left; he explained that he had gone downstairs expecting Schenck to await his return; he wanted it understood that no discourtesy was intended.

When, for some reason that Lincoln knew not, the politician Thurlow Weed seemed offended, Lincoln wrote that he had no unkind thought toward him and concluded: "I am sure if we could meet we would not part with any unpleasant impression on either side." Weed answered in like vein. He was a different sort from Lincoln, but after that frank exchange it would be unlikely for these two men to feel otherwise than as friends.

This thoughtfulness in human situations was an integral part of Lincoln's technique as President. It is hardly too much to say that it enabled him to keep from being unhorsed. In September, 1862, some of the Governors joined in a conference whose purpose, in the exaggerated statement of the *New York Herald*, was to "depose" Lincoln, or to request him to resign.

This was after Pope's defeat at Second Bull Run and things were going badly.

The Governors had their own meeting, then some of them called on Lincoln. They thought it was their movement. Lincoln calmly associated himself with their patriotic purpose for a better prosecution of the war, clipping their wings and stealing their thunder; but he handled the whole matter so skillfully that the episode, which started as a formidable threat to the President's leadership, ended with a collective gubernatorial endorsement of the nation's chief.

Again, in December, 1862, after Burnside's defeat at Fredericksburg, Lincoln was faced with a concerted attack by Republican Senators who met in caucus, where, according to Senator Browning, Lincoln's "enemies" were "doing all in their power to break him down." Lincoln conferred with his Cabinet, then smilingly met the Senators, never failing for a moment to keep the reins in his hands. Such was Lincoln's adroit planning and exquisite tact in this crisis that the complaining Senators, who had planned a remaking of the Cabinet, found after they had shot their bolt that the President was still in command, with the Cabinet unchanged.

Yet all this was done without an explosion, without open hostility, and no one was humiliated. The prairie statesman had met the test.

Preservation of equanimity is usually conceived as a result, or a victory won, but it should rather be viewed as a process or a continuing contest of inner forces. One does not conquer one's temper once and for all. Self-control is not a knockout, but succession of rounds. Lincoln was at it all the time. Can we see him at it?

We can. One of Lincoln's secretaries came in one day to report that Gov. H. R. Gamble of Missouri had written a very irritable letter to the President. That letter is in the Lincoln Papers and it is a sizzler. Gamble accused Lincoln of insulting him and of saying things "unbecoming your position." It was a moment that called for presidential self-control. In his own handwriting, as we find it in his papers, Lincoln wrote to Gamble: "My private secretary has just brought me a letter, saying it is a

very 'cross' one from you. . . . As I am trying to preserve my own temper by avoiding irritants so far as practicable, I decline to read the cross letter."

Lincoln then added a few words on the subject matter of the correspondence. This need not detain us, except that he said: "I was totally unconscious of any malice or disrespect toward you, or of using any expression which should offend you. . . ."

This incident affords almost a ringside view of the President's continuing struggle to avoid being thrown off balance by bad feeling. His mail had been screened. The Governor's letter had been brought to him. He declined to read it, yet he answered it. By the very process of writing out the answer with his own pen he devoted himself deliberately and calmly to the effort for control. He overcame the impetuosity which, as a kind of involuntary reflex, would have seized and controlled a less disciplined mind. He disposed of the irritating factor in the incoming letter. Then he told Gamble that in his own feeling there was no element of malice or disrespect.

That task was finished and the next item could be taken up. But if feelings had been allowed to boil over, the overburdened chief could not so successfully have performed the day's work.

Mindful to avoid treading on others, Lincoln was, nevertheless, a man of sensitive feelings who felt keenly the cruel hurts that were inflicted upon him. When besmirched by men on whom he should have counted he was quoted as saying: "I would rather be dead than, as President, thus abused in the house of my friends."

Lincoln's evenness of control in the handling of men was illustrated in a reprimand which he had to administer to a young captain. The document, which turned up in the newly opened papers, illustrates more about Lincoln than could be told in thousands of eulogistic words.

Lincoln was informally natural where another man might have been stiff and official. He spoke a wisdom born of lifetime self-discipline. He spoke words of reason and peace; he gave helpful advice where another would merely have scolded; he showed the self-destroying folly of truculence and contentiousness.

In Lincoln's handwriting, the reprimand (to Capt. James M. Cutts) reads:

Although what I am now to say to you is to be, in form, a reprimand, it is not intended to add a pang to what you have already suffered. . . . You have too much of life yet before you, and have shown too much of promise as an officer, for your future to be lightly surrendered. . . . The advice of a father to his son "Beware of entrance to a quarrel, but being in, bear it that the opposed may beware of thee" is good, and yet not the best. Quarrel not at all. No man resolved to make the most of himself can spare time for personal contention. Still less can he afford to take all the consequences, including the vitiating of his temper, and the loss of self-control.

Yield larger things to which you can show no more than equal right, and yield lesser ones, though clearly your own. Better give your path to a dog than be bitten by him in contesting for the right. Even killing the dog would not cure the bite.

In the mood indicated deal henceforth with your fellowmen, and especially with your brother officers, and even the unpleasant events you are passing from will not have been profitless to you.

That is all. It appears to be unfinished. It is not an "A L S" (autograph letter signed) but an "A Df" (autograph draft, unsigned). But that document, which Nicolay and Hay omitted when editing Lincoln's *Complete Works*, adds something to the personality and portrait of Lincoln. Though a reprimand, it was more like a friendly interview. Not only was it a kindness to the captain but a priceless bit of personal counsel as to keeping one's temper. The President's improvement on Polonius has a wider import. It has significance as to international relations; indeed, as to civilization itself.

In going over Lincoln's papers one gets a constant reflection of the magnetism of the man. To the present age he is great, but to those who knew him it was personally more important that he was good company. In 1859 Joshua F. Speed wanted him to

visit Louisville; he said it would "rejuvenate" them both. There spoke an old-time chum.

While Lincoln was President his colored barber of Springfield days, William Florville, wrote to him confidently as one neighbor to another, well assured of Lincoln's understanding and sympathy for a downtrodden race. "My people," wrote the barber, "feel grateful to you for it."

Lincoln did not hold himself above small things. He could both work and play. Not only did he have humor; he had that quality of humor that made for mental health and genuineness. Enjoying the theatre, he found a special delight in Shakespeare and in companionship with the actor James H. Hackett, who talked Shakespeare with the President, shared his jokes, and wrote him intimate and racy letters.

Lincoln's awareness that he was at all times dealing with persons, even when unseen, had its effect on his written style. His letters and state papers have force and crisp vigor, often touched by sheer literary beauty; in addition they have a man-to-man quality that is at times dramatic. We know from his manuscripts that his writings and speeches underwent diligent and often laborious revision; yet literary excellence, though he achieved it, was not his main goal. Sometimes he would write an effectively worded letter; then, realizing on reflection the personal effect of what he was saying, he would withhold it. At times he would also do that with a state paper.

We have been considering Lincoln's tactfulness in the human art of governing, but even the finest skill in the practice of that art is worth little unless it is based on principles of government that are fundamental and enduring. If one inquires about Lincoln's ideals in politics (using the word in the pure sense), the basic fact in his credo was a kind of Jeffersonian liberalism. He had both a sense of continuity with elder statesmen and a readiness to criticize conditions in his own day. He took the Declaration of Independence seriously.

His respect for civil rights was deep and profound. Complacency as to such rights, as if they were always safe, was not his policy. He said: "But it may be asked, 'Why suppose danger to our political institutions? . . .' We hope there is no sufficient

reason. We hope all danger may be overcome; but to conclude that no danger may ever arise would itself be extremely dangerous."

He warned against substituting "furious passions in lieu of the sober judgment of courts." Even in time of war he was "slow to adopt" extreme measures. He did so only because "the public safety" required it. Punishment for disloyalty, he noted, should never occur "without regular trials in duly constituted courts under the forms and all the substantial provisions of law and of the Constitution . . . ."

It would be well to restudy his attitude toward war. Writing to his partner Herndon on February 15, 1848, he vigorously refuted the idea that the President may invade a country on the excuse of repelling an "expected invasion." Allow the President to do that, he said, "and you allow him to make war at pleasure." In those words Lincoln hit strongly at what would now be called "preventive war." He believed not in "preventive war" but in the prevention of war. It was his hope that the Civil War might be avoided. He did not consider that it was "inevitable." In his first inaugural he said he would act "with a view and a hope of a peaceful solution of the national troubles."

Seward, author of the phrase "irrepressible conflict," did not intend it as a slogan for civil war; nor did Lincoln so intend his "house divided" speech. He summed up the folly and needlessness of war when he said: "Suppose you go to war, you cannot fight always; and when, after much loss on both sides, and no gain on either, you cease fighting, the identical old questions . . . are again upon you." Bonar Law, nearer to our own day, was speaking in the spirit of Lincoln when he said: "There is no such thing as inevitable war. If war comes it will be from failure of human wisdom."

It is proper to remember Lincoln as one of the world's outstanding liberals. His attitude was shown in avoidance of racial or religious intolerance, in friendliness to labor, in many aspects of intelligent enlightenment. Emphasizing democracy at home, he believed that the American issue embraced "more than the fate of these United States." He condensed much of his philosophy when, in praising Clay, he stressed that statesman's zeal for

the advancement of his own country "because he saw in such the advancement, prosperity and glory of human liberty, human right and human nature."

# LINCOLN'S GREAT DECLARATIONS OF FAITH

*The New York Times Magazine*

February 6, 1949

If one seeks points of concentration in which Lincoln's basic ideas converge, and from which they radiate, he will do well to restudy the inaugural addresses of 1861 and 1865. For Lincoln these were more than "speeches." They were compass and chart—standards, reasonings, declarations of faith, assurances, persuasions. For the historian they offer a focus in a fateful and shifting story. For the student of literature they are examples of presidential eloquence—the kind of eloquence that serves not as exhibition but as purposeful instrument or vehicle.

It was unfortunate that Lincoln was not better known, North and South, in March of 1861. Had people more fully understood his pondering on government, reverence for law, peaceful intent and complete lack of sectional bitterness, much tragedy might have been avoided. The Lincoln they should have known intended to be fair to the Southern people, and, as he had said at the Cooper Union in February of 1860, "do nothing through passion and ill-temper," "calmly consider their demands, and yield to them" where possible. He was anti-slavery, but was thinking of a continuing Union and of the ultimate, nonviolent outmoding of slavery within that Union.

Oppression was not in his thought. Militarism he abhorred. He was never a man of superficial, cocksure attitudes. He had maturity. What would now be called "preventive war" (attacking on the assumption that the other "side" intends to attack) he knew to be a fallacy. In a letter to Herndon, February 15, 1848, he had written: "Allow the President to invade a . . . nation,

whenever *he* shall deem it necessary to repel an invasion, and you allow him . . . to make war at pleasure."

On February 11, 1861, Lincoln said farewell to Springfield neighbors, "not knowing when or whether ever," he would return. For twelve exhausting days he made his journey to Washington, meanwhile deferring, till his inaugural, a full statement of policy in the face of accomplished secession, military activity in the South, doubtful conditions in Maryland and Virginia, threats, financial disturbance, economic peril, and the menace of utter national disruption.

In Washington's Farewell Address of 1796, the first President had advised his countrymen to "cherish a cordial . . . and immovable attachment" to the Union. Was that counsel to be cast aside? Would America flare up into actual civil war? Would Lincoln be assassinated? Would he be permitted to take the oath? Could the counting of the electoral votes proceed peaceably? Would the capital be seized and become the capital, not of the Union but of the new-formed Confederacy?

To avoid possible assassination at Baltimore—predicted by detectives—Lincoln slipped quietly into Washington by a change of schedule and a secret night ride which caused a sad injury to his none-too-high prestige. At the Willard Hotel, in an atmosphere thick with the turmoil of office-seekers and milling crowds, and darkened by clouds of threatened "treason" and revolution, he performed some of the most exacting and important duties of his life as he conferred with political leaders, completed his Cabinet and revised the text of his coming inaugural address.

In its earlier form the address had been privately printed in Springfield, but the tentative text was a well-guarded secret. For Lincoln's use a copy was cut into sections and pasted on large sheets with intervening spaces and wide margins. Other copies were handed to a few advisers, notably Seward, for criticism and suggestion. In the Lincoln Papers in the Library of Congress one can now study these work sheets. One can visualize the President-elect searching for the appropriate word, deleting, inserting, filling margins, adding substantial passages, not neglecting the smallest touches.

He was preparing a keynote, a policy, an exposition of fundamentals; by no means a challenge to an enemy, but an assurance of nonaggression, with a moving appeal to the people. He was not to speak the party language. He was conscious of his role in history. He did not forget that he was the successor of Washington, of fifteen men who had preceded him in the presidential office.

Much could be said of Lincoln's numerous alterations as he revised his address. As these alterations are examined, the thing that becomes most impressive is the repeated emphasis upon conciliation, the needlessness of war, and the importance of an unbroken nation. This peaceful intent had to be presented as no mere weakness, so that he felt it necessary to say he would take care "that the laws of the Union be faithfully executed in all the states."

Then he took up the question that involved the greatest emotional instability, which was that of United States forts in seceded areas. In his early tentative draft he proposed to "reclaim the public property and places which have fallen"—i.e., which had been seized by anti-Union authorities. On the advice of his Illinois friend, Orville H. Browning, he carefully avoided the word "reclaim" and worked over the passage into its final form:

In doing this [seeing that the laws are executed] there needs to be no bloodshed or violence; and there shall be none, unless it be forced upon the national authority. The power confided to me will be used to hold, occupy and possess the property and places belonging to the Government, and to collect the duties and imposts; but beyond what may be necessary for these objects, there will be no invasion—no using of force against or among the people anywhere. Where hostility to the United States . . . shall . . . prevent competent resident citizens from holding the Federal offices, there will be no attempt to force obnoxious strangers among the people . . . .

Lincoln intended to avoid attack, and to this intention he adhered. This was planned not as "strategy" but as a way of avoiding war. There are those who reason that because slavery was a moral evil, the horror of civil war in America was "inevit-

able." This is a non sequitur which Lincoln did not accept. He had clearly indicated that his "house divided" speech was not to be so interpreted. He recognized this world problem—the problem of a maturing society that can envisage the removal of social abuses without stumbling into war.

The day of inauguration arrived. Jefferson Davis had been inaugurated two weeks before at Montgomery. In the seceded portion of the South—a minority of the slaves states—the atmosphere was a combination of elements: excitement, exhilaration, unrealistic assurance, oratory, artillery practice, drill, military organization and Constitution making. At Washington there had ended, in futile adjournment, the Peace Convention, whose earnest purpose had been to implement the policy of Virginia and the upper South, that is, the policy of peace with union.

This 4th of March, 1861, was unique among inaugurations because of tenseness, suspense, wild rumors and military alertness. There were troops lining the streets, sharpshooters on roofs and a voice in the crowd muttering, "that Illinois ape, the cursed Abolitionist" would "never come back alive."

Prophecies of violence, however, were unfulfilled. As Lincoln and Buchanan, with mounted guard, rode together southeastward along the avenue, there loomed on the sky line the gaping dome of the unfinished Capitol. There was a brief appearance in the crowded Senate chamber, Buchanan sighing audibly, Lincoln "impassive as an Indian martyr." On a temporary platform at the east front of the Capitol the procession was seated and Lincoln "in a clear, loud and distinct voice" (so it was reported), read his address to a standing audience of 10,000. The weather was cold and clear. Then he took the constitutional oath of presidential office, administered by the aging Chief Justice Roger B. Taney.

Though not fully appreciated then, this was one of the great American inaugurals. There was no reasonable cause for Southern apprehension, Lincoln was saying. No Federal interference with slavery in the states was intended. (War was to change that, but Lincoln was speaking of continuing peace and of states preserving the Union.) Protection, he said, would be given "as cheerfully to one section as to another." The Union, he said, "is perpetual."

Proceeding from one quieting assurance to another, he declared that mail service would be sustained "unless repelled," that he would not always insist on the Government's "strict legal right" (government he deemed an art, not a legalism), and that he would not do "irritating" things. His "best discretion" would be used "according to circumstances . . . and with a view and a hope of a peaceful solution."

There were, of course, some things he would not concede. He would not approve the extension of slavery into the territories. He was not ready to evacuate Sumter, though he did not use that psychologically loaded word. Finally, he would not give away the Union by recognizing secession.

The Union was his main theme. He stressed the "*more perfect Union*" of the founding fathers. "Physically speaking," he said, "we cannot separate. We cannot remove our respective sections from each other, nor build an impassable wall between them. . . . Can aliens make treaties easier than friends can make laws? . . . Suppose you go to war, you cannot fight always; and when, after much loss on both sides, and no gain on either, you cease fighting, the identical old questions, as to terms of intercourse, are again upon you."

Lincoln's plea to his countrymen was to "think calmly and well. . . . Nothing valuable can be lost by taking time. . . . Intelligence, patriotism, Christianity, . . . are still competent to adjust in the best way, all our present difficulty."

He phrased a final warning in the most conciliatory words he could find. "In *your* hands, my dissatisfied fellow-countrymen . . . is the momentous issue of civil war. The Government will not assail *you*."

For the final passage, Seward had worked up an ornate figure about "mystic chords" that would "again harmonize" when "breathed upon" by the nation's "guardian angel." Lincoln converted it to the following:

I am loath to close. We are not enemies, but friends. We must not be enemies. Though passion may have strained, it must not break our bonds of affection. The mystic chords of memory, stretching from every battlefield, and patriot grave, to every living heart and hearth-

stone, all over this broad land, will yet swell the chorus of the Union, when again touched, as surely they will be, by the better angels of our nature.

Comments at the time were varied. References were made to Lincoln's "craft and cunning," his "coercive proclivities," his lack of "dignity or patriotism," his "tawdry and corrupt school-boy style." In the South, where the address was not fully published and sometimes badly botched, it was misrepresented. Leaders at Montgomery made it appear that "war between the North and South was now inevitable."

Not all the newspaper comments were sour. In the words of the *Hartford Courant* the "whole civilized world will echo Lincoln's Inaugural, and agree that it is fair to both sides, and worthy of a patriot statesman." The *National Intelligencer* declared that "it leaves to conservative citizens good reason to expect a conciliatory course at the hands of the new President."

The Southern reaction was not entirely unfavorable. After the address, as reported in the *New York Times* (March 5), "A Southern gentleman . . . seized him by the hand, and said, 'God bless you, my dear sir, you will save us.' To which Mr. Lincoln replied, 'I am very glad that what I have said causes pleasure to Southerners.' "

Four years later Lincoln stood in the same place. Along with bloodshed, much of which had been indecisive, there had been the distortions of the war mind. The year 1864—though the election produced an unexpected Lincoln victory—had been chiefly a year of gloom. Early had carried his raid in July to the gates of Washington, Lincoln himself being in danger on the parapet at Fort Stevens. It is a matter of record that the President expected to be defeated. Constitutional democracy had been so far preserved as to permit the people to defeat him even during a desperate war.

Grant's movements had been slow, meager of result and fearfully costly of human life. There had been peace talk, mixed with politics, and there had been bitter factional opposition to Lincoln within his own party. In case of defeat, Lincoln had specifically planned to save the country, if he could, by non-partisan cooperation with the President-elect.

He had not entirely refused peace negotiations, but had stanchly insisted upon the Union, which meant surrender by the Confederacy. At Hampton Roads in early February of 1865 he and Seward had met with three Confederate leaders in a peace conference which was considered fruitless, but issues had been clarified. He had sought to mitigate the horrors of war, had not practiced retaliation, and had not poured out hatred against Southerners. He had written (in a slightly known autograph instruction to the Secretary of War, May 17, 1864): "blood cannot restore blood, and government should not act for revenge."

He took the oath for the second term from a new Chief Justice (Chase) and with a new Vice-President (Johnson). Emancipation had been declared. To the Negro race Lincoln was a magic word. Negroes were in the 1865 inaugural parade. Final victory was near, with Grant's vise closing on Lee, and Sherman moving up from the deep South, but peace had not arrived, and when it did arrive Lincoln's work would not be done.

With such thoughts in mind, but with no hint of self-congratulation or of praise for his Administration, he spoke the distinguished words of his second inaugural:

On the occasion corresponding to this four years ago, all thoughts were anxiously directed to an impending civil war. All dreaded it—all sought to avert it. While the inaugural address was being delivered from this place, devoted altogether to *saving* the Union without war, insurgent agents were in the city seeking to *destroy* it without war. . . . Both parties deprecated war . . . .

Neither party expected for the war, the magnitude, or the duration, which it has already attained. . . . Each looked for an easier triumph. . . . Both read the same Bible, and pray to the same God; and each invokes His aid against the other. . . .let us judge not that we be not judged.

He closed with the passage that lives in our history:

With malice toward none; with charity for all; with firmness in the right, as God gives us to see the right, let us strive on to finish the work we are in; to bind up the nation's wounds; to care for him who

shall have borne the battle, and for his widow, and his orphan—to do all which may achieve and cherish a just and lasting peace, among ourselves, and with all nations.

High contemporary praise for this speech came from the *Spectator* of London: "President Lincoln read a . . . paper, which for political weight, moral dignity and unaffected solemnity has had no equal in our time. . . . No statesman ever uttered words stamped at once with the seal of so deep a wisdom and so true a simplicity."

The addresses of 1861 and 1865 were very different, but in fundamental thought they had points in common: avoidance of sectional bitterness, emphasis upon tolerance, common humanity, justice and peace. The twentieth century is not the theme of this article, but it should not be forgotten in these times that Lincoln's awareness of the evils of society coexisted with a realization that war was not the civilized answer. Vachel Lindsay looked into the heart and mind of Lincoln when he wrote:

He carries on his shawl-wrapt shoulders now  
The bitterness, the folly and the pain.

# LINCOLN AND THANKSGIVING

*Lincoln Herald*

October, 1947

In the middle year of the Civil War, 1863, a notable lady with a new idea, a determined mind, and all her facts assembled, took pen in hand and wrote to President Lincoln. Her letter, now available in the Lincoln Papers in the Library of Congress, was marked "private" and bore the date line "Philadelphia, Sept. 28th, 1863." She wrote:

Hon. Abraham Lincoln—

President of the United States

Sir.—

Permit me, as Editress of the "Lady's Book," to request a few minutes of your precious time, while laying before you a subject of deep interest to myself and—as I trust—even to the President of our Republic, of some importance. This subject is to have the *day of our Annual Thanksgiving made a National and fixed Union Festival*.

You may have observed that, for some years past, there has been an increasing interest felt in our land to have the Thanksgiving held on the same day, in all the States; it now needs National recognition and authoritative *fixation* only, to become permanently, an American custom and institution.

Enclosed are three papers (being printed these are easily read) which will make the idea and its progress clear and show also the popularity of the plan.

For the last fifteen years I have set forth this idea in the "Lady's Book", and placed the papers before the Governors of all the States and Territories—also I have sent these to our Ministers abroad, and our Missionaries to the heathen—and Commanders in the Navy. From the recipients I have received, uniformly the most kind approval. . . .

But I find there are obstacles not possible to be overcome without legislative aid—that each State should, by statute, make it obligatory on the Governor to appoint the last Thursday of November, annually, as Thanksgiving Day;—or, as this way would require years to be realized, it has occurred to me that a proclamation from the President of the United States would be the best, surest and most fitting method of National appointment.

I have written to my friend, Hon. Wm. H. Seward, and requested him to confer with President Lincoln on this subject.

As the President of the United States has the power of appointment for the District of Columbia and the Territories; also for the Army and Navy and all American Citizens abroad . . .—could he not, with right as well as duty, issue his proclamation for a Day of National Thanksgiving for all the above classes of persons? And would it not be fitting and patriotic for him to appeal to the Governors of all the States, inviting and commending these to unite in issuing proclamations for the last Thursday in November as the Day of Thanksgiving for the people of each State? Thus the great Union Festival of America would be established.

Now the purpose of this letter is to entreat President Lincoln to put forth his Proclamation, appointing the last Thursday in November (which falls this year on the 26th) as the National Thanksgiving for all those classes of people who are under the National Government particularly, and commending this Union Thanksgiving to each State Executive: thus, by the noble example and action of the President of the United States, the permanency and unity of our Great American Festival of Thanksgiving would be forever secured.

An immediate proclamation would be necessary, so as to reach all the States in season for State appointments, also to anticipate the early appointments by Governors.

Excuse the liberty I have taken.

With profound respect

Yrs truly

Sarah Josepha Hale,  
Editress of the "Ladys Book"

Mrs. Hale's name was known throughout the households of America. She has been called "The Madonna in Bustles." Besides

being the perfect editress of the Victorian era she was a poet, story writer, and promoter of worthy causes. Her editorship was a large factor in giving to *Godey's Lady's Book* its commanding position. Though not of the reformer type she used her opportunity and her prominence in the publishing world to improve and broaden the life of American women. She worked for her sex in the matter of education (helping to found Vassar College), and in such fields as medical training, competent obstetrics (then sadly in need of improvement), more pay for women teachers, higher wages for workingwomen, improved sanitation, and preparation of women as medical missionaries. One of her causes, for which she conducted a determined campaign that was all her own, was the nationalizing of the Thanksgiving holiday.

The roots of Thanksgiving, of course, reached far into the American past. Beginning with Governor Bradford and the Plymouth colony, with religious expression of thanks for harvest and for more bountiful food when primitive conditions kept people close to nature, the celebration had grown through colonial and early national times as an American custom, more especially in New England; but in the days before Lincoln's presidency there was no regularly recurring annual proclamation of the President. Among Lincoln's fifteen predecessors the only ones who had called upon the people for specific days of public thanks or prayer were Washington, John Adams, and Madison.

Washington issued such proclamations in 1789 and 1795, Adams in 1798 and 1799, and Madison in 1812, 1813, 1814 and 1815. There were special motives or occasions for these proclamations. The appeals by Washington were in recognition of the new Constitution of 1789 and the suppression of the Whiskey insurrection in 1795; Adams's proclamations pertained to our unfortunate trouble with France; those of Madison related first to the War of 1812 and then to the making of peace with Great Britain. The days recommended by these Presidents ranged through January, February, April, May, August and September to November. Washington named November 26 in 1789 and February 19 in 1795.

The harvest-home festival was not related to these earlier presidential calls, which were not annual and were not associated

with any particular time of the year. Thanksgiving Day, though well established, was proclaimed by the Governors who indicated the days to be observed in their states.

In the 1840's Sarah Hale began a campaign of public appeals which she continued year by year in the *Lady's Book* in which she urged that the Governors proclaim the same date, "*the last Thursday in November*" (her italics), so that Thanksgiving Day would become a recognized holiday for Americans at home and abroad. By concurrence of Governors—that was her earlier idea—this national custom, which was spreading to the South, would become more than a holiday; it would, she hoped, be a positive force for the Union. In the unenlightened politics of the fifties, however, this Union emphasis became inaudible in the noise and clamor of sectional conflict.

The idea of state concurrence, however, took hold. In 1859, thirty states and three territories united in naming the last Thursday in November. In her "Editors' Table," a regular *Lady's Book* feature, (the other editor was Louis A. Godey), Mrs. Hale persisted in her appeals while a few states lagged in compliance; then in 1863 she had another idea. Would it not be better to have the proclamation come from the President? Would not a presidential appeal establish a fixed date, unvarying from year to year, which would put Thanksgiving in the calendar of holidays as securely as Washington's Birthday and the Fourth of July, which she referred to as the only other nation-wide holidays or festivals that were strictly American.

The importance of Mrs. Hale in bringing the subject to Lincoln's notice has often been mentioned, but it is only with the recent opening of the Lincoln Papers that the full story can be understood and documented. Among these papers one finds the "easily read" sheets which she enclosed in her letter to the President. This printed material (the "Editors' Table" for July, 1859, February, 1860, November, 1860, and November, 1861) expanded the suggestions made in her letter and explained why the late November date was urged.

The last Thursday in November [she had written in 1859] was suggested because then the agricultural labors of the year are generally completed; the elections

are over; those autumnal diseases which usually prevail more or less at the South have ceased, and the summer wanderers are gathered to their homes. . . . Let the last Thursday in November be consecrated by gratitude to God for His wonderful blessings on our people, the crowning glory of which is our National Union.

Five days after Mrs. Hale's letter was written in Philadelphia President Lincoln, on October 3, 1863, issued "A Proclamation." In the midst of "a civil war of unequaled magnitude" he noted that peace with other nations had prevailed, and that the year had been "filled with the blessings of fruitful fields and healthful skies."

"Needful diversions of wealth," he added, "have not arrested the plow, the shuttle, or the ship; the ax has enlarged the borders of our settlements, and the mines . . . have yielded even more abundantly than heretofore."

He continued: "No human counsel hath devised, nor hath any mortal hand worked out these great things. They are the . . . gifts of the most high God, who, while dealing with us in anger for our sins, hath nevertheless remembered mercy. . . . I do, therefore, invite my fellow-citizens in every part of the United States, and also those who are at sea and those who are sojourning in foreign lands, to set apart and observe the last Thursday of November next as a day of thanksgiving and praise."

Mrs. Hale evidently wanted to make sure that the matter would be attended to in 1864. This time she wrote to Seward—October 9 from Philadelphia—enclosing advance proof of a forthcoming article in the "Editors' Table" and asking the Secretary of State to hand this to Lincoln, as she did "not like to trouble him with a note." That her letter to Seward, as well as the proofsheets, reached Lincoln is evident from the fact that both documents are found in the Lincoln Papers.

Lincoln's proclamation of 1864, issued on October 20, struck the note of hope for "deliverance from all our dangers and afflictions" and recommended "fervent prayers" to God for "inestimable blessings." Again he set apart the last Thursday of November as the day to be observed.

In the 1864 article (enclosed for Lincoln in her letter to Seward) Mrs. Hale gave a brief reference to her endeavors for

many years. Then she wrote: "Last year, 1863, the Day was appointed by the President, and was joyfully observed in our own land, . . . and in the Old World, wherever the knowledge of this *fixed day, the last Thursday of November*, was known to American residents as the American Festival." A nationalized Thanksgiving had been achieved and it was with an air of pride that she sent the printed sheet to President Lincoln "With the Compliments of The Editress."

Lincoln's proclamations of 1863 and 1864 set a new precedent—that is, an annual proclamation of Thanksgiving by the President—which has been followed by all his successors. Legislative action came many years later. It was on December 26, 1941, that President Roosevelt signed a resolution of Congress fixing "the fourth Thursday of November in each year" as Thanksgiving Day, and making it a "national holiday."

It was not that Lincoln had acted entirely according to the pattern indicated by Mrs. Hale. She had asked the President to proclaim the day for the "classes of persons" (in the District of Columbia, the territories, the army, navy, etc.) that were under the jurisdiction of no particular state, at the same time making "an appeal" to the Governors to proclaim the same day for their states. Instead of that procedure, which seemed to raise the question of legal authority and official right, Lincoln simply called upon all his "fellow-citizens" to join in the observance. The Governors were not brought into the picture, so far as the President's proclamation was concerned. In this connection it is of interest to note in the Lincoln Papers the handsome crop of gubernatorial proclamations of Thanksgiving in 1863 and 1864. The newer and more sparse the state or territory, the more elaborate and impressive was the printed proclamation. It was a matter in which the Governors took pride.

There was an unusual flavor to some of the observances of the occasion as revealed in the Lincoln Papers. In the military district of South East Missouri a "general order" went out from headquarters at Pilot Knob on November 21, 1863, announcing the President's proclamation and ordering observance "by the troops of this command" with relief "from all labor." And from northern India came a long letter signed by seven missionaries of

the Board of Foreign Missions of the Presbyterian Church giving a glowing account of their celebration of Thanksgiving in accordance with Lincoln's 1863 proclamation.

If space allowed it would be of interest to illustrate the manner in which the Presidents, by their emphasis upon fundamental values, have given expression to a kind of non-controversial American credo in the proclamations they have issued. Thus Washington stressed "civil and religious liberty," and the importance of rendering "this country more and more a safe and propitious asylum for the unfortunates of other countries." Mrs. Hale considered it important to emphasize that the celebration was not sectarian, and in November, 1864,—the date is significant—she wrote: "It is the peculiar happiness of Thanksgiving Day that nothing political mingles in its observance."

It is fitting that the nationalizing of the event should be associated with Lincoln who led the nation through what Allan Nevins has called the "Ordeal of the Union." It is of interest that one of Lincoln's calls for prayer and national rejoicing was promised, though never issued, in the last speech of his life, April 11, 1865.

The bit of correspondence here sketched is an example of the "finds" that one encounters in the Lincoln Papers, a collection which has proved rich and humanly significant beyond the hopes or expectations of scholars. The episode has a bearing on the development of the presidency as an institution. In making the proclamation Lincoln was acting not so much in terms of a legal function, but rather as a focus of national thought, as the man to whom the people turned, the spokesman of the whole nation.

This is one of the main factors of the presidency, which cannot be fully defined if one has in mind only its strictly official character. The President does various things because of the unlegislated significance of his position. In this, as in the Gettysburg address, a matter that belonged first to the Governors was, so to speak, captured by the President. The initial launching of "the Soldiers' National Cemetery" was not a national enterprise. It was a cooperative undertaking of a large number of Northern states with Pennsylvania in the lead. The committee on arrangements for the dedication was not national and the date was fixed

to suit the convenience of Everett, not of Lincoln. In the first annual report of the commissioners of the organization (1864), signed by David Wills, Governor Curtin is emphasized and Everett featured as the orator, but Lincoln is not even mentioned!

Lincoln could say a thing well and by his utterance it became important. There is more than common interest in those occasions when he spoke with careful choice of words to the whole people on national themes. We are dealing here with a matter that has to do with his public relations and with that emphasis on the Union, and on the force and merit of unity, which stood out as his cardinal policy.







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